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RUEHHE/AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PRIORITY 0004  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ PRIORITY 2208  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 0455  
RUEHMU/AMEMBASSY MANAGUA PRIORITY 1367  
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY 3913  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 CARACAS 002238

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [EU](#) [OAS](#) [VE](#)  
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH EU TROIKA -- ELECTION  
OBSERVATION AND UNSC

CARACAS 00002238 001.2 OF 004

Classified By: AMBASSADOR WILLIAM R. BROWNFIELD FOR REASON 1.4 D

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Summary  
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¶1. (C) During a lunch for EU Troika representatives at the Ambassador's residence July 26, Finnish Ambassador Mikko Pyhala said the EU received a formal invitation to observe the December 3 presidential elections. (Note: Venezuelan-based representatives of the OAS and Carter Center report they have not yet been invited.) The Troika representatives said Brussels would decide on the ad hoc observation mission at the Latin America Committee meeting in early September. Factors in the decision would include the National Electoral Council's response to the EU observation mission's recommendations from the 2005 elections, available funding, and how much preparation time they would have for the mission. Troika representatives also indicated that various EU members and the Swiss would be providing financial support of electoral observation NGO Ojo Electoral. Troika representatives also discussed their continuing concern with the draft anti-NGO law. Separately, the Ambassador and EU representatives exchanged views on Venezuela's UNSC bid, which all seemed to agree would have problems in Europe and Asia/Oceania. The Ambassador also noted that BRV resistance to U.S. efforts to reopen the Consulate in Maracaibo would likely cause some additional bilateral friction in the coming weeks. End Summary.

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CNE Invitation Arrives  
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12. (C) During lunch at the Ambassador's residence for EU Troika reps on July 26, Finnish Ambassador Mikko Pyhala told Ambassador and PolCouns that the EU had just received a formal invitation from the National Electoral Council (CNE) to observe the December 3 presidential elections. The invitation letter was dated June 7, but wasn't received from the CNE until July 26. The Troika (which included EU Ambassador Antonio Garcia Velasquez and German Charge Rolf Herdon) speculated that Venezuelan MFA reluctance may have caused the delay. When asked about the probable EU response, they said the EU had not budgeted for a Venezuelan observation mission this year. (Note: This is what they said last year too.) Brussels would not decide on an ad hoc mission until the early September Latin America Committee meeting, they said. Separately, EU Second Secretary David Bouanchaud told poloffs that if approved, a preliminary mission could be sent as early as September and a final decision could come as quickly as October. Bouanchaud thought EU member states favored a mission, but said the EU Commission might be more reluctant. The Troika implied that there would be general reluctance to sending a mission.

13. (C) The Troika reps said the EU would need more information before making a decision. Specifically:

-- CNE response to the EU mission recommendations from the last elections. Pyhala said that, at present, the EU did not believe they had been met, or seriously addressed.

-- Results of electoral registry (REP) audit. The current audit is scheduled to end July 31 with results released in mid-August. Since the audit is run by seven government

CARACAS 00002238 002.2 OF 004

entities, we doubt the results will indicate any serious flaws in the REP. Opposition studies continue to raise serious questions about the integrity of the voter rolls, but the CNE will likely point to a recent informal study by three autonomous universities that concluded the irregularities are not substantial enough to skew election results. Troika representatives noted they had had conversations with a number of non-governmental experts and continued to have doubts about the REP and other aspects of the CNE-managed electoral process.

-- Clear understanding of how much time EU would have to prepare an observation mission. Last year's experience suggests this may be one of the last points known. Ambassador noted the importance of coming early should a decision to come be made.

-- Results of the opposition's August 13 primary. Polling and lingering voter concerns suggest the primary will not result in a decisive opposition mandate for the winner, most likely at this point to be either Julio Borges or Manuel Rosales. A poor showing would echo the EU's finding in its last report that there was profound distrust of the electoral process within the country.

-- Whether CNE and opposition had reached a formal agreement on electoral procedures. This too, may be among the last pieces of information, as decisions on key conditions are still out-standing. Troika representatives noted that while they understood the CNE would set conditions early, they admitted that it might be quite late in the process before final negotiations by the CNE, opposition and observation missions on electoral conditions were concluded. The CNE is currently debating regulations for the presidential campaign, but seems unwilling to take EU recommendations to rein in President Chavez' abuse of public funds, "Alo Presidente," or his national broadcasts. The CNE has also delayed, yet again, debate on the use of fingerprint machines in the

election, the elimination of which is a key opposition demand.

¶4. (C) The Troika representatives noted the CNE said "other institutions" were also to be invited to observe. Local OAS representative in Caracas Carlos Carbacho and Carter Center rep Hector Vanolli told PolCouns July 26 that their organizations had not yet received invitations, but they expected to. Both were non-committal on the prospects for a favorable decision on an observation mission by their headquarters.

¶5. (C) Pyhala said that several European Union members, including the Finnish government, and the Swiss were in the process of either providing or seriously considering giving financial support to electoral observation NGO Ojo Electoral. Troika representatives indicated their view, which Embassy shares, that Ojo is a generally balanced operation, at least in the Venezuelan context, and would conduct an effective observation program. They admitted however, that they were troubled that unlike previous elections, the CNE had not yet certified Ojo as an official electoral observer.

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Anti-NGO Law  
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¶6. (C) In response to questions on the issue, Pyhala said

CARACAS 00002238 003.2 OF 004

that he was still concerned with the draft International Cooperation Law which could seriously hamper external, including EU, support for civil society in Venezuela. He noted that he was pleased with some of the changes the BRV was now proposing to the law, but that it remained a concern.

He also noted that the EU was not going to engage in a direct negotiation with the BRV over the specific language of the text.

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UNSC Race  
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¶7. (C) Pyhala asked the Ambassador's view of the UNSC election. Ambassador gave his assessment that Venezuela would win GRULAC by 10-12, with a near split in Africa and Middle East. Venezuela would lose Europe by a wide margin and Asia/Oceania by 10-20. Pyhala said the EU probably would not take an EU position; governments would vote individually.

Ambassador said that was fine, but if we were misreading their probable voting positions, they should tell us. Pyhala said he pretty much agreed with us. The Europeans did not want a UNSC that could not reach consensus on important issues. Pyhala noted the Guatemalans could improve their chances if they recognized Belize sovereignty right now. The Ambassador replied that the situation took 200 years to come about, and might require more than six weeks to resolve. Pyhala then asked about the possibility of a GRULAC compromise candidate emerging at the end. Ambassador said that Chavez would not agree, and that it would depend on Brazil - not us. Pyhala speculated that Brazil would probably have to be the candidate as Chavez would never accept anyone else.

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Maracaibo  
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¶8. (C) Pyhala asked if there were any other developments on the horizon that might be of interest. The Ambassador noted that since more than three months have elapsed since the U.S. submitted its formal request to the BRV to reopen the U.S. Consulate in Maracaibo, it appeared that at least the informal answer was "no". Given that the BRV has eight consulates in the United States and that the U.S. government was serious about reopening Maracaibo and being treated in a

proper reciprocal manner, this issue would likely cause some friction with the BRV in the coming weeks. Pyhala said he understood the U.S. position.

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Comment  
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19. (C) It is not clear whether the European Union will agree to send an electoral observation mission for the December 3 Presidential elections. While the Ambassador was carefully neutral on whether or not such a mission should be sent, the Troika representatives understood the point that to be effective a decision needed to be made early and if positive the mission should get on the ground months, rather than days before an election. The Troika also noted the serious problems with the electoral system and the lack of CNE or BRV responsiveness to their (in our view) fairly mild recommendations. They seemed to, at least at the moment, not have a clear idea of what might be accomplished by sending a

CARACAS 00002238 004.2 OF 004

team in the current electoral environment. This was a sentiment echoed by the representative of the Carter Center. Pyhala's comment on the UNSC race, that the EU would likely not have a common position, but the great majority of members would not favor a Bolivarian presence on the UNSC, seems to echo what Embassy has heard elsewhere.

BROWNFIELD